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Conference Abstract

Botanicalcollections.be: The New Virtual Herbarium of Meise Botanic Garden (BR)

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Abstract

The botanicalcollections.be website (http://www.botanicalcollections.be) is the culmination of the three year Digitale Ontsluiting Erfgoedcollecties (DOE!) project. Over this period we have digitally imaged 1.2 million African and Belgian herbarium specimens and much of their label data. All these data are freely available on our new virtual herbarium www.botanicalcollections.be. For this we have to thank a generous grant from the Flemish Government.

The site was officially launched on the 23rd March, 2018, at the Fourth Annual Meeting of Plant Ecology and Evolution held at Bouchout Castle in Meise Botanic Garden (https://sites.google.com/plantentuinmeise.be/ampee4/).

Before developing the website we conducted a user requirements analysis (Vissers et al. 2017. These requirements formed the basis for development from initial design to the finished product. Lots of features were incorporated to make the site as user-friendly and usable as possible; persistent URIs, zoomable and downloadable images and access to data. Each specimen can be annotated and is available in a machine readable format.

The goal of the botanicalcollections.be website is not only to make digitized specimens from the Botanic Garden available, but also to centralize and display the herbarium

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specimens from other Belgian herbaria. A cooperation agreement will make collaboration easy and transparent.

The benefits to herbaria of participating in this virtual herbarium include greater publicity, the ability to show how their specimens contribute to overall knowledge, and a mechanism for identifying where to focus future collecting efforts, all of which help validate their worth to institutional administrators. In addition, such cooperation helps build professional relationships who, because of disparate interests and obligations, might not normally connect with each other.

Keywords

virtual herbarium, mass digitization, user requirements

Presenting author

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Presented at

SPNHC

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